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Policing Chinese Politics: A History

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Dutton, Michael: *Policing Chinese Politics: A History.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), xiii + 441 pp., pbk $23.95. ISBN 0–8223–3489–5.

This book is a history of the role that policing played in the politics and policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from 1927 to 1976. The author's theory is that due to the CCP's preoccupation with internal threats that emerged in the wake of the disaster it suffered at the hands of Jiang Jieshi's forces in 1927, the Party created a style of political behavior that would cause huge problems for China after the revolution was completed. Having adopted the premise that the greatest danger to the Party and the revolution came from within, Party leaders built a security structure using the simplistic logic of a binary divide between friends and enemies. When linked to a mass-mobilization style of policing, this led to a devastatingly effective system of policing that penetrated virtually all walks of Chinese life. This dynamic helped make the revolution possible by releasing passions that generated political energy, but it was also profoundly destructive, for it induced a state of paranoia that magnified the perception of threats and created an environment of excess.

After introducing his theoretical framework, the author proceeds to survey the history of China's public security institutions in the Communist era. While at times the theoretical discussion is rendered opaque by awkward language, this survey is clear, systematic, and informative. Here one finds the Party's security policy oscillating between a mass-line approach and a more pragmatic, less politicized, style of policing. The former was aimed at sustaining a high state of political tension and was responsible to a substantial degree for the excesses of the Maoist period. The latter was oriented toward ordinary criminal activity, rather than political crimes, and was more consistent with the goal of achieving economic and social stability; it led to a style of policing that was more pragmatic and professional.

One question that emerges occasionally that could have been addressed more thoroughly is whether or not China, given its historical aversion to legalistic institutions, was likely to have become a law-based society by the mid-20th century. Was its failure to do so the consequence of China's particularistic legal tradition, or was it the product of the CCP's creation of a mass-line style of policing and its addiction to the polarizing enemy-vs.-friend paradigm that Dutton does much to explain? Dutton's findings support the latter explanation: China's chaotic legal environment under Mao and the CCP was not the product of deeply rooted characteristics of China's culture. Nor was it part of a well-conceived grand revolutionary strategy. Rather, it evolved gradually as the party-state struggled to deal with its own tendency, forged in the heat of its early struggle for survival, to politicize ordinary life. The history of public security in China does show that China's police institutions unfolded in the shadow of an ancient contest between Confucian and Legalist views concerning the proper mechanisms for ordering the state, its most recent manifestation being the tension between the rule of Mao and the Party and the rule of law. Nevertheless, it also developed essentially in response to the overriding practical concerns of a party leadership that was attempting to establish and maintain its dominance and, due to is own experiences in the revolution, tended to associate political dissent with treachery.

One of the most interesting parts of this work is its treatment of China's security policy after 1976, the history of which provides an important indication of just how far China's market-driven reforms have come in the past thirty years. Under Mao, policing was a tool

that the Party used to enforce Communist ideological orthodoxy. Now, public security is often a private matter; security forces commonly lie in the hands of profit-seeking enterprises, many of which are wholly owned subsidiaries of public security agencies themselves including, ironically, the Ministry of Public Security. These private police organizations serve the financial interests of their owners rather than the ideological goals of the party-state, and Dutton's coverage of them sheds important light on this aspect of the nation's post-Mao development.

The scholarship presented here appears to be based upon solid primary research, including at times interviews with confidential sources; presumably they are individuals within the public security apparatus whose identities the author wants to protect. Readers will find the book thought-provoking, informative, and a welcome addition to any collection of titles that deal with CCP history and recent Chinese politics.

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Henriot, Christian and Wen-hsin Yeh (eds.): *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xii + 392 pp., $75.00. ISBN 0-521-82221-1.

This anthology brings together scholarship that exploits archival and other sources (memoirs, films, photos, etc.) that have become available in China and Taiwan since the early 1990s in order to conduct a wide-ranging review of conditions in Shanghai under Japanese occupation from 1937 to 1945. The conventional view of wartime Shanghai is that after Chinese forces left the city in November 1937, and especially after the Japanese occupied the foreign concessions in late 1941, the city became a solitary island [*gudao*], isolated from the interior and, in Sherman Cochran's apt words, "marooned both culturally and commercially." [67] The contributors to this volume have substantially revised this interpretation. Their findings strongly suggest that although war, occupation, and the politics of resistance and collaboration affected conditions in Shanghai dramatically the city never became an island: its people and institutions responded flexibly to the new environment, and life reached a state of "quasi-normalcy" that belies the narrative of dislocation that dominated the scholarship from 1945 until the end of the Cold War.

Several contributors who deal with the economic life of the city and its environs (Coble, Cochran, Rottmann, and Wakeman) find that while tactical adjustments often had to be made, in many cases business was conducted more or less as usual. Pre-existing commercial networks often survived the occupation, and capitalists found various sorts of connections to the interior—family, native place, school tie, etc.—still to be quite functional. When conventional mechanisms failed, money often simply took their place, corruption serving as a reasonably effective lubricant with which to smooth out the rough spots imposed by the various political pressures that impinged upon commerce. Indeed, many entrepreneurs seem to have prospered by working all sides of what grew into a multi-polar system linking the Japanese, the Nanjing and Chungking regimes, and the Chinese Communists. Thus, not only were links between the city and its hinterland preserved, and sometimes manufactured, but the exchange of goods, personnel, contraband, and even political partisans flowed relatively